

Webinar: 2/26/2026 – Proposed Updates to the ESL Program Framework Guidelines

Questions from the webinar

1. Is PDE still going to base some of their ESL specialist competencies on the TESOL teacher preparation standards PK-12? They are going under revision currently. [PDE will look at the new TESOL teacher preparation standards PK-12 when they are released and consider changes if necessary.](#)

Course Credit Changes/Field Experience Hours

1. Can they double count those credits in their UG or grad program? [Yes, undergraduate coursework in ESL can count towards the ESL program specialist certificate if those courses are part of the ESL program specialist program.](#)
2. Can those courses count as electives from their UG? [Yes, elective courses in ESL in undergraduate can count towards an ESL program specialists if they are part of that program.](#)
3. Are you saying Chapter 49 ESL classes count toward the program specialist? [Chapter 49 ESL courses can count toward the program specialist certification if those courses are part of that program.](#)
4. If a program needs to be revised to add three credits, what's the timeline for this? [Revised ESL guidelines are now available. EPPs have one year to add three credits and make necessary changes to their ESL programs.](#)
5. If a person in an ESL specialist program and has no undergraduate ESL course, they have to have a bare minimum of 15 credits, correct? [ESL program specialists' programs must have coursework between 15-18 credits.](#)
6. My program already has 18 credits. Are the competencies changed from 10 years ago when they were approved? [Revised ESL guidelines are now available. EPPs have one year to make necessary changes to their ESL programs if they are not within the 15-18 credit recommendation.](#)
7. We have 18 credits program, if want to move to 15 credits program, what do we have to do? [ESL program specialists' programs must have coursework between 15-18 credits.](#)
8. We currently have 60 hours of field experience across three classes; do we have to reduce this? [No. The minimum is 40 hours.](#)

Common Ground Statements/Questions

1. I wanted to ask about the Common Ground Framework, I have been told I have to have trauma, culture, tech and teacher ethics added in as well, why are these needed for ESL Program specialist when they already have had them in their Instructional level I, it's a tremendous amount to try and do in such a short program. [In response to your question, see the revised guidelines:](#)
 - a. [Candidates graduating from an EPP with their first Instructional I certificate before August 31, 2026, are required to complete the competencies in Common Ground \(Cultural Awareness, Trauma-Aware, Mental Health & Wellness, and Technological & Virtual Engagement\) , Structured Literacy, and Professional Ethics. Candidates](#)

graduating from an EPP with their first Instructional I certificate after August 31, 2026, are not required to complete competencies in Common Ground, Structured Literacy, and Professional Ethics, as these competencies would have been included in their Instructional I coursework. However, if a candidate did not complete an Instructional area that required structured literacy, then the candidate must receive preparation in and meet the Structured Literacy competencies.

Placements in Classroom – Questions/Statements

1. So, is it okay to do it in their own classroom? We have always told them they couldn't. In response to your question, see the revised guidelines:
 - a. The educator can complete the field experience of the ESL program within their classroom if the educator has ESL students within the classroom. If the educator does not have ESL students within their classroom, then the educator should observe an appropriately trained and ESL certified colleague (to serve as mentor) who has ELs within their classroom.
2. Do all these field experience hours need to be in-person or can some be online? Field experiences always must be face-to-face according to the revised ESL program specialist guidelines.
3. If we need to add credit hours, can we do a program modification? Yes, you can submit a program modification request. To initiate this request, you can send an email message to RA-EDPREPPROGRAMS@pa.gov
4. All of the field experiences in our program have been stage III. Does it mean we need to change the nature of fieldwork that's been working out? Effective field experiences provide candidates with increasing exposure to learning situations and school settings under the guidance of program faculty and trained mentors throughout the preparation program. ESL field experiences are embedded in the coursework of the ESL program. If you are already providing this for candidates (and the candidates are receiving at least 40 hours), then you do not need to change your program.
5. Did I hear that you recommend stage I and II fieldwork for the ESL Cert or did I mishear that? As the ESL certificate is attained only after an educator has obtained an Instructional Level I or II certificate, the goal of field experience is observation/exploration. With this change, the ESL candidates are required to complete a total of 40 hours of field experience within the overall ESL preparation program.
6. Could you please repeat if undergraduate students who are student teaching "can" or "cannot" use their student teaching as observation of ESL lessons? Undergraduate students can complete their ESL field experience in their student teaching classroom if they have ESL learners in their classroom. If they do not, the candidate should observe an appropriately trained and ESL certified colleague (to serve as mentor) who has ELs within their classroom.